

The Bloomfield Gazette.

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Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one, have oftentimes no connection. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men; Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.—COWPER.

FORTNIGHTLY.

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BLOOMFIELD, N. J., SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1872.

FIVE CENTS.

FOR THE BLOOMFIELD GAZETTE.

TO A PETRIFIED SKULL.

Sax, ancient relic, who and whence art thou?
Where didst thou live? Tell thy mysterious name?
Why Chemist nature here preserves thee now?
Thus to perpetuate thy deathless fame?

Did Tubal arm thee with an iron spear
And brass shield, here to pursue thy foes?
Or did the organ charm thy ravished ear
Which Juba tuned six thousand years ago?

Didst thou survive when David's harp was strung?
When rapt Isaiah glowed with heavenly fire?
Or didst thou last when Melch's psalms sung.
Or the sweet bard of Mantua tuned his lyre?

Say, did Demosthenes like forests pour
His bold philippics on thy astonished ear?
Or Cloe, with sweet and magic power,
Thrill thy sweet soul and start the unconscious tear?

Or didst thou dwell in this dear favored spot,
Where thou wert found, which Liberty reveres?
Ah, yes! and where a thousand are forgot!
Who bought that liberty with blood and tears?

Did pure religion's holy flame inspire
The heart that with its life-blood fired thine eye?

Hadst thou a Newton's lore? a Milton's fire?

Or didst thou in deep savage ignorance die?

Perchance the forest thou didst wildly roam,
Pursued thy game with arrow and with spear;
At eve reclined where forests found a home,
In calmness slept, nor dreamed of danger near.

Thou didst perchance a hapless wanderer die,
No home, no friend to soothe thy last sad hour,
To watch thy ling'ring breath—to close thine eye,
To make thy grave, or weep the tyrant's power.

But now the iron slumber of the dead,
Hath locked the channels where thy blood has flown,

A power equal as Medusa's head,
Has changed thy lifeless form to senseless stone.

Thy spirit from its mansion long has fled,
None may pursue its dark and devious way,
But still at eve, perchance with airy tread,
It oft revisits its cold slumbering bier.

But why interrogate, when all is vain?
Go, grace some cabinet till heaven shall call;
Thy slumbering dust shall then revive again
And join the spirit thou didst once enthrall.

Bloomfield, Nov. 10, 1872. ERSKINE.

SEA SCENES,

FROM

OLD MAN OF WAR'S JOHN.

(We commence below a series of interesting sketches, substantially true, written over thirty years ago, and printed in 1841 in *The Classic*, or, *Oleary Monthly*—a bi-monthly magazine, issued at that time in another state by the students in our alma mater. As that periodical had a brief existence and a small circulation, it is thought the selections we may now and then make from it will possess the interest and freshness of original communications.—E.R.)

SCENE I.

THE RESCUE.

I come with mighty things;
Who calls me silent? I have many tones—
The dark sky shrills with her mysterious moans,
Borne on the sweeping winds.—MRS. HEMANS.

OLD JOHN was a worthy relic of that class of seamen, which, we fear, are becoming too nearly extinct—the sailors of our revolution; men who carried the Bible in their pockets and the spirit of a Christian in their hearts—who could pray upon the eve of battle and fight none the less valiantly; and when the conflict had passed and victory was won, would share their own meals with, and yield their own eat to, the wounded enemy. An infinite fund of anecdotes and nautical adventure had the old tar, with an invertebrate *peacock* for yarn telling; and often, when a lad, have we played the truant, when we should have been conning our school lessons, or stolen quietly from the pleasant hearth circle, and scampered over the heath to old John's cottage—and there passed the long winter's evening in listening to his stories of the sailor's life. They had in them, to our youthful fancy, all that was beautiful of romance; and we remember them well.

"A sterling fellow was young Stafford"—he commenced one evening, as we took our station, as usual, on a low stool at his knee—"A sterling fellow; yet a sad and lonely man, who had known some deep sorrow that was eating his life away. We loved that officer (he was a Second Lieutenant), and there was not a tar on ship-board but would have split his dearest life-blood to have saved him from the mortal ill. He was a constant dayman between us and the authorities of the ship; often have I seen him approach our commander, half in hand, as some poor delinquent stood trembling at the gangway, beneath the suspended lash; and pray his release; and ever would he return, with that quiet smile; and—"Well, Jack, I have given my pledge for you, so remember—remember Jack!" Jack would remember; the man of our company who had dared to have forfeited the pledge of Charles Stafford, when given for his good conduct, we would have thrown overboard. We loved that young officer, as well we might; and I must give you the story of his rescue.

"We were running down the Bay of Biscay, and the breeze which had blown smartly during the day from the N. E. had freshened into a gale. It was a boisterous night, and the devil's smile was on

the ocean. You may not know what that means, my boy; I will tell you. When the wind is very high, or veers suddenly from one point of the compass to another, it will catch up the crests of foam from the waves, and, whirling them over the sea, give its surface the appearance of a boiling cauldron. When the sailors see this, they know there is mischief in the storm, and they call it the devil's smile. Our ship labored convulsively as she was lying to beneath little more than a span of canvas, and it became evident she would soon have to be put before the gale, through three hours sounding would lay her on the rocks of Cape Finisterre.

"It was the third night-watch, and Stafford was the officer of the deck. He had looked pale and sickly, during the day, and I had often heard the Commander entreat him to leave his station and put himself under the surgeon's hands; but his answer was ever, 'I shall be better here, sir—I shall be better here.' It was fearful to see him that night, when the flashes of lightning would at times play over his wan countenance, as he stood clasping the weather-rigging, peering to the windward with his night-glass, or watching the laboring spars aloft, and giving his commands in his usual quiet manner, and with a voice scarce stronger than a woman's. Yet that voice was ever heard; never was the shout of the tempest so strong, or the confusion of a sudden alarm so great, but we could hear the commands of Charles Stafford. But there were officers on board that ship whose trumpets might out-bellow the tempest itself, yet were we slow to hear them; so much do kindnesses quicken the ear of the sailor, my lad. It is the heart often, and not the ear, that heareth.

"He had stood long, watching the singular motion of the ship as she fell heavily into the trough of the sea and rose again slowly and trembling to its surface, when his commands were heard to prepare for putting her before the wind. It is a critical and often a dangerous movement to be effected in boisterous weather, and the sailors were instantly at their posts, with eyes intently fixed on their officer, and quietly waiting his commands. Our Lieutenant kept well his time; and, as there came a moment's lull in the gale, his orders were given to haul down the mizen-spar, and to put the helm hard up. The ship fell off slowly till her broadside was exposed to the waves, sunk bodily into the enormous trough, rose again upon the next surge—rolled her spars heavily to windward, yet continuing to obey her helm, till the wind and waves at last struck her abeam, and she was speeding on before the gale. 'Nobly done!' was scarcely from the mouth of our officer, with the accompanying command of 'Haul in your fore-braces, my boys,' when a huge billow came rolling under her counter, curled over her taffrail, and came down upon the deck 'with the dull sound of the o'dd upon the coffin-lid.' When the ship rose and shook herself from her load of water, the deck was swept of every moveable object, and the sailors were clinging to whatever, at the moment of danger, they had clung to. Every eye was instantly turned to where the Lieutenant had stood, but he was not there. At that moment we heard his cry for help, as he floated past the stern of the ship. 'He is overboard!' was instantly upon every tongue. 'Stafford is overboard!' But scarcely had it been hissed in the yell of the tempest, when the sailor at the wheel, an athletic and noble-hearted fellow, grasping a life-buoy at his side, sprang into the sea. 'Pay away!' shouted the Commander, who at this moment appeared at the gangway and took in the whole aspect of affairs at a glance. 'Pay away at the line of the life-buoy!' 'Bring the ship again into the wind! Ease off your fore-braces!' Up with the mizen-spar, its vine-clad walls, its thatched roof, its mossy well, its old wicket gate, its well-worn hearth-stone, and the string that hung by the corner; they are distinctly before the mind, as if it were but yesterday, we left them. We may not soon forget our last visit to the old man of the cottage. It was a pleasant Spring morning, as we were leaving home for the first time, for a distant school. The carriage was at the door, and friends had gathered to say their last kind adieu; but we must needs go over and say good-bye to Man-of-war's John.

"Well," commenced the old tar, "you are going into the big world, my boy, and you will meet strange things there—things you have not dreamed of. And, mark well; life is a rough and boisterous sea; many a noble bark goes down in storm and tempest—many a one is stranded upon hidden quicksands and unknown coasts; but the wofuldest of all, my lad, is the shipwreck of the calm! Did you ever hear of such? Well, I will tell you of one.

"We were half way across the waters; it was high noon and a dead calm; the winds had all fallen asleep. There was no motion, save the easy swell it had;

which seems so like the gentle breathing of a sleeping monster. All around was still, and smooth, and glassy. Did you ever see the ocean in repose, my boy, with a clear, bright sky above, and a breathless air around? Then did you never feel the presence of the Great One as you may feel it. His voice is in the tempest, and he may give his power to the troubled deep; but his presence is only in the calm. They tell us of your majestic temples—with their long-drawn aisles and massive shafts—daintily lighted, and filled with half-hushed music; and they bid us think the solemn feelings of His presence may be there. It cannot be; 'tis all man—man! Everything speaks of him there. We cannot look down upon the altar stone but we see the impress of his chisel; or into the clear depth of the font, but there are the marks of his handiwork. But the ocean! the still, deep and calm-hued ocean!" (And here the old man would shake his few white locks, as was ever his wont, when thoughts came up too big for utterance.) "The ocean! the broad ocean! Well, we were half-way across the waters, and it was high noon, when the cry arose on board the Queen Esther, 'Water in the hold!' The ship is sinking! the ship is sinking! Then came the confusion attending an alarm on ship-board. The man at the mast-head shot down to the deck, as if he had fallen from his station. The cabin-boy

ship could be seen as they lay struggling in the surf. The officer was exhausted; his head rested on the sailor's shoulder, who, with one hand thrown around his body and the other clasped in the meshes of the buoy, clung for life. It was a critical moment. How were they to be drawn on board? The greatest care was necessary or the sailor would lose his hold. Men were placed in the mizen chains to catch them as they should be thrown up to the ship by the waves. Once—twice, were they borne within a fathom of her side, and again fell back into the abyss below. Once more—but we missed them. We could see the working of the sailor's countenance as he struggled to retain his grasp—could see the blood trickle from between his fingers, that clasped the meshes of the buoy. 'I can hold out no longer,' was at last forced from him, as we were again borne back upon the receding wave; and we gave them up for lost. 'God save us!' shouted another gallant fellow, as, grasping the mizen-brace, he sprang upon the side of the ship, and, watching his opportunity, leaped for the buoy. He gained it; in a moment he had passed the line around the exhausted seamen—lashed them to the buoy—grasped it firmly himself, and shouted 'Pull away, my hearties!' As the ship rolled again heavily to leeward, and a wave came climbing up her side, we drew them on board. There was a merry chorus to the singing of the storm, just then, my lad—a right merry chorus! Never did a heartier hymn go up at the hour of victory, than that moment went up from the decks of the Marmaid to the noble rescuers of Charles Stafford.

SCENE II.

THE SHIPWRECK OF A CALM.

And when the hours of rest
Came, like a calm upon the mid sea brine,
Hashing its billowy breast—
The quiet of that moment, too, is there;
It breathes of him who keeps
The vast and helpless city while it sleeps.

—BRYANT.

This noble old tar! I can see him now as he used to sit in front of his cottage, of a silly afternoon, and watch the crafts as they plied upon the river before him. I can see him now: his few white locks; his bent form; his quick, restless eye; his noble, weather-beaten countenance, where the strife of many years had written the whole log-book of life: the sun of every day had burned its hue—battle and storm, shipwreck and famine had left their records there.

It is one of the most quiet and pleasing pictures of the past, with us; that little white cottage by the river side, with its vine-clad walls, its thatched roof, its mossy well, its old wicket gate, its well-worn hearth-stone, and the string that hung by the corner; they are distinctly before the mind, as if it were but yesterday, we left them. We may not soon forget our last visit to the old man of the cottage. It was a pleasant Spring morning, as we were leaving home for the first time, for a distant school. The carriage was at the door, and friends had gathered to say their last kind adieu; but we must needs go over and say good-bye to Man-of-war's John.

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Everything interested him in which our young people were engaged. There was a concert of music, in which the children and youth sang and recited pieces. They were instructed by their pastor, and the concert was given for the benefit of the S. S. Library. Lai Sun took part with the rest, and in broken English recited the hymn, beginning—

"Yes, my native land, I love thee." His mind became interested in the subject of religion, and he gave evidences of piety. After a suitable time he united with the Presbyterian Church under the ministry of Rev. E. Seymour.

Having completed a course of study at Hamilton College he returned to his native land, engaging in mercantile pursuits. He thought his influence would be more felt as a Christian merchant by his countrymen than if he gave himself entirely to missionary work.

We have been favored with communications from his own pen as well as from others who made his acquaintance.

Slowly we drew in upon the life-buoy. I dashed a tear from my eye—she was the captain's daughter, and I must give her her story." But I could remain no longer. I grasped the hand of the old tar—received his 'God bless you, my boy,' and sped to my waiting friends. I never saw him after—peas to his ashes! I have many a time regretted that I waited not the close of the sailor's yarn, for, at musing hours, have I often wondered what could have been the fate of that lone girl upon the ocean. I have seen her at times, pale, faint and languishing upon that still and glassy sea; again in the storm—her long hair flying out upon the gale, the soul of Dido in her noble eye, cheering the fainting marines to their task. Often a more pleasing picture has presented itself; and I have seen her in a far off cottage, home at a cheerful evening hearth, with a happy group around her, telling of the pearls of the deep, and the ship that went down in the still ocean. But these are only dreams; I never could learn the fate of the sea-captain's daughter.

Let fall the captain's noon draught and sprang to the gangway. The steward, passing to the after-cabin, dropped his aspon upon the deck and grasped his boiler. The sailors rushed from their mess boards and were at their posts before the boatswain's call could bid them to it. Pumps were rigged and manned; hatches run off; staves erected; buckets strapped and in motion; and before the Captain's mate could change his quid, or Jack (the monkey) could mount into the rigging to laugh and chatter over the confusion of the hour, the water was pouring in torrents from every scupper of the ship. We toiled hard and long. The rough voice of our captain was ever cheering us to our task, but we missed him not. 'Every man for his life!' was the cry, and each arm put forth its strength, till not a muscle was left inactive. We toiled hard and long! 'Think of your homes, my lads,' cried our noble mate, as he dashed his trumpet to the deck, and sprang to take his turn at the pump—'think of your homes and to it valiantly!' We did then think of home, and friends, and though the thought would bring the tear to eyes unused to weeping, it brought also a strength we had not known of. There was another who cheered us in the toils of that hour—a slight-formed girl. She was ever in our midst at every post—at the side of every toiling sailor, lifting the refreshing draught to his lips, and whispering in his ear, 'do manfully—do manfully.' And we did do manfully! for there was not a tar who trod the decks of the Queen Esther but loved that girl as he did his patron saint. She was the good spirit of our ship; and her low, trembling voice could do more in that hour of danger than could the thought of death or the stern commands of our officers. We did do manfully! toil'd like men that have the grave before them, but in vain. The ship was sinking fast, and the rough voice of our captain was again heard 'Avast and to the boats.' The davit-tackle fell went down of a run. The boats were adrift—along side—loaded—poured off; and we lay upon our oars to see our gallant ship go down. But just as she was staggering, as if in a last struggle against her fate, the cry arose, 'Henry is in the after cabin!' The captain in a moment was upon the thwart of his boat, and his trumpet to his lips. 'He cannot be saved!' The boat that approached the sinking vessel is lost; he must go down with her! 'Then I go with him!' shouted a gallant young sailor in one of the boats nearest the ship as he plunged into the sea. It was a moment of fearful anxiety. The captain yet stood with his trumpet suspended to his face, and motionless. The sailors leaned over the gunwail of their boats with their eyes intently fixed upon their noble comrade. He struggled manfully for the ship, but she was fast sinking. We could see her white streak, the girt ribbon, and the black upper wale, each sinking gradually beneath the surface of the water, and the fore chains were level with the sea when he leaped on board. He rushed for the after cabin, which luckily was above deck, and for a moment was lost to our view. It was as fresh as the grave; not a word was spoken; not a breath was heard. Again he appeared, bearing the sick man in his arms. A low murmur of applause arose, but was soon hushed—the danger was yet too great. Again he plunged into the sea, bearing his burden skillfully upon the water—struck off for the boat—gained it—and was dragged on board just as our gallant Queen Esther, rolling heavily to larboard, went down. A shout of applause arose to the noble tar, but was soon hushed beneath the oppressive sense of loneliness that at the moment came over us.

"I have seen noble ships go down in storm and battle, but never saw I like that of a gallant craft, with every spar aloft, and sail all spread, sinking quietly to her grave of waters, without a breeze to raise a ripple at her side, or lift the pennant from her mast! It was a sad moment and theirs were mourning hearts that waited at her funeral.

"But that girl, he continued, as he dashed a tear from his eye—she was the captain's daughter, and I must give her her story." But I could remain no longer.

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